The Most Dangerous Time

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The Most Dangerous Time

by TigerPrawn

Summary

This wasn't how Duncan thought he would die. And he's not convinced he's actually dead.

Newest instalment of the Tagged For Time Travel Series. Can be read as a standalone fic, but would likely make more sense if you at least read A Sense of Self

Chapter 1

As Duncan watched the car barrel towards him through the snow, he thought about the many ways he could have, and perhaps should have, died over the years.

It seemed so mundane, but also fitting. After all this time of no one being able to get the hit on him, never able to best him, it seemed somehow appropriate that he would die crossing the stretch of icy road whilst a car lost control and slid over the compact snow.

These thoughts went through his brain in the same amount of time it took for him to brace for the impact, no time to run, just enough to know he was about to die. And then his body was flying through the air.

He hit a snowbank with a crunch just as the world around him started to spin.

The most dangerous time for men is the year they retire.

*

When the tornado of energy dropped from the bluff it sank, as their bodies once had, back when they had been Hannibal and Will, before they had become Kaecilius and Cal… Before Rochefort and Grigg, Galen and Mortimer, Jacob and Buddy, Cliff and Jack, and...

It plunged into the depths, into and through the planet, gathering momentum until it blasted beyond the confines of the atmosphere. Spreading like a wave of pulsing energy from the planet and out through the universe.

This was why Kaecilius had been warned.

Grigg opened the door, Galen pressed the button, Jacob crashed the car, Cliff was swallowed into a different reality and…

The alterations his actions might cause. The changes that now might happen.

The versions of them throughout the universe that might be brought together again and again in order to continually right the wrong Hannibal had wanted to, and now - as Kaecilius - did correct.

His teacup had come back together.

Char watched as the horseless carriage careened across the white landscape. Snow? He had only seen it once before on his travels; it never snowed in Kyrria, a place where there seemed to be constant blossoms all year round. The man in black stood directly in the path of the strange, wheeled beast and it was moving too fast for him to move out of the way. Char watched these unnatural things unfold, a dream of somewhere else.

Across this universe, parallel versions, backwards and forwards in history throughout all of time and in all dimensions - teacups came back together.

Char drew in a sharp breath as he sat up in bed, shaking and sweating.

He wouldn't call it a nightmare. It was simply that the dream was so real, so visceral that it was unnerving. Not least because this was not the first time he had dreamt of a man in black, likely this same fellow. Though it really had never felt this real before.

It was hard to say as he never quite saw his face, was never quite close enough or clear enough. If anything, this was the most detailed he'd ever seen the man, his clothes so different to the cloak Char had thought him to be wearing in previous dreams. But the carriage and even the situation itself, moved so fast that he was barely able to catch more than a glimpse of the man.

Char's nightshirt was stuck to his skin with sweat, and his heart thundered in his chest. Not just because of the strange dream, but because of this man.

He had more than once considered taking these dreams to a fortune teller or a fairy, in the hopes that their insight might explain why he saw this man in his dreams. And why he felt such a deep and trusting pull towards him, as though he had known this man all his life.

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"My Lord!"

Char turned as the voice echoed across the vast library, spotting its owner and watching as the messenger ran towards him.

"What is it, catch your breath," Char spoke with compassion as it was clear how harried and out of breath the messenger was. "What is it that is so important?"

"Your Highness," the messenger continued and then bowed low even as he struggled to control his breathing. "With your uncle still away I was told to alert you. There is something strange happening at the edge of the forest."

“Strange?” Char asked, curious but incredulous. He had learned at university that sometimes too much stock was put into the strange and magical, when it was simple a natural occurrence or the manipulations of a con man.

“Snow, your highness. A small blizzard no more than a mile wide, a complete blanket of snow covering some farmer’s land, and she is not best pleased with the effect this will have on her turnips.”

“Snow?” Memories of his dream niggled at Char’s mind as tried to dismiss the odd coincidence. “It never snows here.”

“And yet I saw it with my own eyes, Your Highness. I troubled myself to do so before bringing this to you, in case it was folly.”

“You did well, thank you. Please go down to the kitchens and have them fix you some refreshments.”

The messenger nodded, though he lingered for just a moment, as though wanting to ask what the prince planned to do about this strange phenomenon and whoever might have caused it.

As the messenger took his achingly slow walk out of the library, Char rang for a servant. He would take a contingent of the royal guard and inspect this for himself. Though, he considered, he should likely go and dress in warmer clothing before doing so.

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Duncan groaned as he woke by increments, each part of him coming alive with flashes of pain.

He lay still, trying to get his bearings, feeling the cold snow around him. It was compact and hard, painful. His mind filled in the blanks, putting him on the side of the road where he’d just been hit. But when he finally opened his eye and struggled to sit up, he looked around and saw masses of trees.

And despite the snow that he sat in and the light fall of it all around him, there was sun beyond. It looked like it should be a beautifully sunny day, but there was the snow. He wasn’t even sure he’d seen a single day without snow the whole time he’d been in Montana.

Looking around hurt his neck, but he forced himself to do so, his head aching and despite now being used to the change in depth perception from his missing eye, he had trouble focusing. It came and went, the trees now just a blur, but he could see his own hands. It was disconcerting.

Must have been a hell of a hit, he hadn’t even expected to survive it. After years of patching up his own wounds with super glue and staple guns, he considered whether he should actually head to an ER and get checked over. Was this a concussion?

He was sitting in a field, he realised, the trees seemed to form a forest that he was on the edge of. And when he looked out over the other fields, it was actually the case that it was sunny,

summery. The snow was just in his immediate vicinity and beginning to melt.

“Over here, Your Highness!”

Duncan heard the voice at the same time he heard the trampling of the ground followed then by the crunch of feet on snow from directly behind him. He tried to turn to look but the pain was immediately debilitating and his vision blurred again.

“It has begun to melt, it covered a wider range, sire. And this flurry was almost a blizzard.”

Duncan frowned as he tried to turn again, this time deciding instead to amble to his feet in order to turn and see what the commotion was.

He had barely managed to get to his knees when he heard that telling sound, that strange metallic song, of blades being drawn from sheaths.

“Guards protect the Prince!” The voice called as Duncan tried to focus in on what he saw, hearing the protest for calm from a younger voice in the crowd. But he couldn’t make out the figure or any of them. A blur of shapes that Duncan was at least sure was a mixture of men and horses, or else some terrifying beasts.

“You there,” the harsh voice called, presumably to him. “What is your business here? Are you some sort of Warlock? How have you caused this?”

Duncan opened his mouth to respond, not that he had any idea what to say in this baffling place, but then pain shot through him again and he lost his footing, lurching forward.

He heard the young voice call out, “there is no need for force,” a moment before he felt the blow at the back of his head and everything went dark again.

*

Duncan resumed consciousness slowly, a new throbbing pain in his skull that he could have done without.

But he is no longer in the snow, he notes. Now he is in a warm bed, tucked in and comfortable. He takes in a slow breath through his nose and doesn’t smell any of the tell tale signs of a hospital. Those sharp smells of disinfectant and blood were definitely not there.

Instead there was the scent of blossoms, hay and other earthy smells. His ears pricked up as he heard some footsteps, realising they were outside of a window, the same place the smells drifted in from.

He might think he was back in Montana and a passing friendly motorist had given him a bed to sleep in, perhaps whilst they called for a doctor. But it was warm here, pleasantly so, he realised as he felt the slight breeze over his bare chest.

At that he blinked his eye open and tried to focus, first on the room and then on himself. Slowly it came into alignment, no longer blurry. He could see the hewn stone walls, the

beams of the ceiling, and when he looked down, his own naked chest and his lower half covered with a sheet and thin blanket.

It was an undeniable compulsion to lift the blanket and ascertain the extent of his nudity. And he found himself relieved to find he was at least still in his boxer shorts.

“You’re awake!”

The excited voice came from the other side of the room and Duncan dropped his sheet in order to try to turn and look for the source. The ache in his neck and shoulders stopped the movement, but there was no need to move when the owner of the voice appeared at his side and eased him back into the soft pillow.

A young man with curly hair and soft looking skin stood over him. His eyes were so blue that it was like looking at the summer sky Duncan knew was just outside of the window.

“Just relax, rest. You’ve taken a blow to the head, and you seem to have sustained um, many other injuries…”

Duncan didn’t miss the way the young man’s eyes quickly swept over him. His body was covered in scars, some from his retirement, but others dated back decades.

When the young man realised Duncan had caught the glance, he gave a soft smile.

“You’ve been injured before. Many times. I can’t begin to imagine the life you’ve led.”

At that Duncan huffed, amused.

“My name is Char, I’m here to take care of you, until you are well enough to get back on your feet. What is your name?”

Duncan eyes Char warily for a moment before gruffly saying, “Duncan,” his voice breaking over the word thanks to a dry mouth and sore throat. How long had he been unconscious?

Char smiled, an infectious, boyish smile of a youth with no concerns.

“Nice to meet you.” Char replied, and it was so sincere that Duncan had no doubt he truly meant it. “Rest, I will have some food fetched for you. You have been sleeping for days, I expect you’re very hungry.”

All about his task, Char barely waited for Duncan’s slight nod before he was off towards the door. A big heavy wooden door that looked like it belonged in a medieval castle.

As he lay back in the bed, angling his head to look up at the summer sky outside the open window, Duncan knew only one thing. That he had no fucking idea what was going on.

*

After instructing the kitchen to prepare some hearty soup for Duncan, Char started his way back to the guest room, finding himself eager to return to the man’s company. It was a strange

feeling, that he hadn't really felt before.

At first intrigue, about the snow, the magic that must have caused it and then at the mysterious man at the centre of it all. But it was more than that, as he had looked at the man's harried features and watched as Char had his own valet undress and bathe the unconscious man. He was thickset but muscular, hairy and covered in scars and half healed wounds. And that might be intimidating or worrying, if not for the strange familiarity he felt towards the man that had him near swooning instead. Just as other swooned over him.

He had never understood it. The way his screaming fans had been so invested. He'd had to attend university in a different kingdom simply to avoid their persistent attentions. Their screams of "I love you" as they tried to tear his clothes from him.

But now, faced with this man so unlike any he had ever seen before, Char thought he might understand a little of that mania.

"Char, my dear nephew."

Char hadn't noticed his uncle in the doorway to the library he had just passed, but now he stepped into the corridor behind him, Char stopped and turned.

"Uncle Edgar, you're back." Char replied jovially.

"As are you I see," Edgar replied with a charming smile.

"Yes, I decided to come home for the school break, and-"

"Oh yes, I heard. I meant from playing nurse to our guest. You know we have perfectly capable staff. And the servant's quarters might have served better than one of our guest rooms."

Char felt the heat rise on his cheeks. As always with his uncle there was a strange note in his tone that Char couldn't quite work out but sometimes worried that it was disapproval no matter how nicely the words were delivered.

"I know," Char replied sheepishly. "But I feel responsible, it was one of my guardsmen who struck him. And… I'm intrigued to know where he came from and what magic brought him here." Char hesitated to remind his uncle that it was his own castle and he did not need to justify any of this, but he knew to do so would be childish and hurtful.

"Magic you think?" Edgar asked.

"I don't know what else it could be, first the snow and then this man." Char replied, his university education not having prepared him for this in the least.

"The snow? Ah yes, I heard about this but it's all gone now. I can only take the word of yourself and your guards… and your new friend."

Char frowned at his uncle's words. Was that an accusation, a taunt? Before he could think on it further, Edgar chuckled and waved the thoughts away with a dismissive hand.

“I am sure there must have been snow, as has been said. Though I suspect it is another trick of the ogres. Devious beasts, I put nothing past them. Not since they ripped your father to shreds.”

Char swallowed at the words and felt that same sharp pain in his chest that he felt every time his uncle raised this point.

“Go on, run along and look after your new friend. Once he’s well we best send him on his way.” Edgar smiled fondly, “once we have questioned him about all this, of course. I will be happy to hear that he is in fact not involved with the ogres. Because if he is, the conversation might not go well at all.”

Char nodded with a frown, not seeing for a moment how the ogres could be linked to any of this, but his uncle knew best of course.

When Edgar’s shoes clipped down the corridor, away from Char, he took a moment before continuing onto the guest room.

He opened the door and saw Duncan sat up in bed, looking out the window. And Char forgot everything that had been said with his uncle and his immediate focus narrowed to just that one man.

“Duncan,” Char smiled, enjoying the name on his lips. “The kitchen will bring up some food.”

Duncan looked at him, his only eye focused on him in a way that made Char’s breath hitch.

“Thank you,” Duncan’s gruff response wasn’t unfriendly, more awkward if anything and Char found he liked it. The timbre of his voice sent a shiver down Char’s spine and a slight flush to his cheeks.

“Can you…” Char started as he moved towards the bed, thinking about sitting on the edge of it, but deciding against it considering the man was half nude. Char swallowed. “Can you tell me how you came to be here? Where the snow came from?”

Duncan looked at him for a long moment before he finally said, “I don’t know, I don’t remember.”

Char frowned, concerned. “What about before the snow? Before being here?”

Duncan blinked his one eye and replied, “my name is the only thing I remember.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Duncan tries to make sense of where he is...

On his second morning in the strange place, Duncan was no closer to understanding where he was. He had tried to politely suggest that he be allowed to leave the room, but Char and the others who came and went from his room to make sure he was comfortable, insisted that he stay resting and that they would bring him anything he needed. From their wary expressions, it was clear to him that he was a prisoner.

And that made sense. After all, the last thing he remembered before being knocked out was being on the verge of apprehension. They thought he had caused the snow, and himself to appear, and they were just as surprised as he was that he was in this place.

They might be treating him well, but he was sure that would change if he tried to leave. And so Duncan resolved himself only to do so as a last resort. He never went in blind on a job, he always researched and looked at all angles before doing anything. And the same had to be true here, he needed to know what or where he was dealing with before he could work out his next move.

He tried to ignore that the thought of leaving and not seeing Char again gave him a strange feeling. A pang of something like regret, that he rarely felt. Perhaps it was just the beautiful face? Or perhaps it was the way Char looked at him and the sensation it gave him from his chest down to his groin.

In the end, Duncan asked for a book. Something recent and popular, he had said. Hoping this would be a clue to where he was. The only thing he knew for sure was that he was in an English speaking country. And he had even had his doubts over that - what if the blow to his head had been so hard that they were all speaking Romanian or Lithuian, or one of the other languages he had picked up over the years, and his mind was playing tricks on him?

In the end, he decided he might not be able to trust anything. Not even his own mind until he could be sure he wasn't concussed.

"I brought you a book," Char let himself into the room with a smile. His beautiful and sweet jailer.

Duncan noted, not for the first time, that the boy no longer knocked even though all the others did. Was it familiarity or something else? The kid certainly acted like he owned the place when he gave orders to the others, as kindly as he put them.

Duncan had begun to form the idea, from his limited exposure in this room, that all the people that had come to his room so far were employees of wherever it was he found himself, a great house? Or maybe some sort of hospital? Or the nicest prison he'd ever been in! And Char was in some sort of senior role in charge of them all, that much was clear from the orders he gave and deference they all showed. Remarkable, Duncan thought, that one so young had such a senior position. Some sort of head butler or nurse? Or perhaps he really was a jailer, though not like Duncan had ever known. The roles would surely become more clear once he knew where he was.

"Thanks," Duncan mumbled and held out his hand. Char passed him the book and he turned it over in his hands. It was thickly bound, and despite looking like it should be an antique, it was completely pristine. It even still had the smell of fresh ink. "This is… the most recent book…" Duncan mused out loud.

"It's very popular," Char enthused. "A best seller already."

"I see…" Duncan let the book fall open and ran a finger over the unmarred pages. "What year did this come out?"

"This year," Char confirmed, unwittingly side-stepping Duncan's subtle question.

"And it's a bestseller…" Duncan led.

"Throughout the whole of Lamia," Char confirmed.

Duncan nodded and closed the book, "thank you. I am sure I'll enjoy it." He knew where he was now, with absolutely no idea of where on earth Lamia might be. It was a start.

"Maybe it will jog your memory." Char smiled hopefully, "perhaps you've read it before."

"Perhaps," Duncan nodded. He found himself strangely thinking of the last book he had read - Caring For Your New Dog. "Does it have any dogs in it?" Duncan found himself asking, absentmindedly.

"What a funny thing to ask," Char laughed. "It's a mystery novel, I don't think there are dogs. Do you like dogs?"

Duncan swallowed and chided himself inwardly for his blunder. He cleared his throat. "I don't think I would be good with pets."

Char chuckled and nodded, "I think I know what you mean. Heston has put me off for life."

Duncan frowned, wondering if Heston was a dog that had also met an untimely end. Though likely not quite as violent an end as Rusty.

"I should let you rest," Char said, shaking his head dismissively. He moved to pick up the breakfast tray that was set on the side table. Duncan had devoured the toast and jam, though the tea was not to his liking.

"Wait," Duncan held up his hand to stop Char. "Um, will you stay for a bit?"

Duncan tried to convince himself that he only wished for Char to stay because he wanted to try and get more information and so far Char had been the most forthcoming of them all. Not because there was something about the young man that intrigued him. The way he carried himself, the natural confidence that was just short of being arrogant. He was just as his name suggested, charming. Nor the way he was sure Char stole glances at him and seemed just as eager to stay as Duncan was.

As Char looked towards the chair, Duncan patted the space next to him on the bed and with a slightly nervous smile, Char sat.

The fact that he took this offer made Duncan shiver. Quite unusually. He wasn't usually one to get flustered, by anything at all really. In fact, he might tell himself that his intention had been to see what Char was open to so that he might use that to his advantage. Wouldn't be the first time he had seduced someone to get closer to a mark.

Business was business after all. But this wasn't business.

Duncan wasn't sure what it was.

But he was sure he wanted Char to stay a little longer.

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By the time Char had left, someone had come to bring him a light lunch and Duncan got out of bed and asked for his clothes. They had apparently been taken to be laundered and so, with an apology, someone brought him some other clothes in his size.

He had of course taken note of the clothes people had been wearing. It wasn't lost on him that they dressed in a manner that was strange to him. Part of Duncan wondered if it was some sort of traditional livery, if this were a grand house and them the servants. But when they had brought him a pair of britches and a cheesecloth shirt, he wondered if it went further than that. Local clothing? Could he think of anywhere in the world where they still dressed in such a fashion?

The only thing that came to mind was a particular job in Australia that had taken him through a small town that had been settled by Germans and now was a sort of German themed attraction, complete with restaurant and shop staff wearing traditional lederhosen. Or maybe those Renaissance Fairs in the US? But if that was the case, surely someone would have mentioned it in passing, given that it was an odd place to end up incarcerated.

Whatever the case, there was no denying that he would learn nothing more from this room, and he needed to get out of this place, try and find his way back home.

The memory of being hit by a car and finding himself in this place came back to him with a visceral impact to his gut. What had happened? Had he been taken from the side of the road? Dumped somewhere else for some reason?

If he hadn't been so sure that the collision was genuinely an accident he might wonder if someone had a hit out on him. And that was something his aching bones didn't want to even

entertain after everything that had happened with Damocles. That life was behind him now. He was retired and it would take quite some convincing to bring him out of retirement.

Duncan dressed and paced around the room, checking the window and the door, taking in everything until he knew all that could be known about the room. Once he had done that there was no other move to be made than to explore beyond the room.

Not an attempt to escape, no that was still a stupid idea at this point. Instead he would play dumb and wander the corridors until he was told not to.

Duncan waited until after another servant had popped in and refreshed his water jug before he made his move. He listened at the door, and when he was sure the coast was clear Duncan let himself out and started down the corridor. He knew they didn't lock the door, clearly assuming that telling him not to leave was enough. Maybe in this strange place where they wore strange clothes and seemed almost always jolly, they did expect that.

The corridor was long, the doors far enough apart to indicate that all the rooms were the same size as his or bigger. He passed a large window where he was able to look out on what could only be described as palatial grounds.

Duncan ducked into an alcove when he heard some noise on his blind side, taking a peek to see that it was only a couple of servants talking as they walked by the end of the corridor. Once the coast was clear he continued, finding some carved stone steps and making his way down to a more open floor. There he followed the musty scent of books and found a library, noting the location. It could be useful to return to for information if he had the chance.

He turned the handle gently, quietly. But even so the door creaked a little as he eased it open.

Duncan heard the steps behind him, but he had nowhere to go, and so stood in the doorway. He started to turn to greet the person who had happened upon him when a voice told him, "don't move!"

Duncan raised his arms slightly to show he was no threat, and that earned him a poke in the back with something sharp. A spear or a bayonet?

"I said-"

"What's going on here?" Char's voice came from within and he appeared from one of the aisles. Duncan didn't miss the way Char's cheeks pinked up when he spotted him.

"Your prisoner has escaped, Your Highness."

Char and Duncan's eyes locked on each other. Duncan hearing words he realised Char hadn't wanted him to.

"Um, he's not…" Char muttered before drawing himself up and with authority continued. "I will deal with him. Please leave us."

Duncan heard the guard behind him hesitate, but then he clicked his heels together as he nodded and then retreated down the corridor.

“Your Highness?” Duncan asked. He watched Char struggle to keep the authoritative air, and for a moment Duncan thought he might break, but he didn’t. Char took in a deep breath and then gave a nod.

“Prince Charmont of Lamia.”

Duncan nodded, “I see. And I’m your prisoner?”

“Your door was not locked,” Char continued in his strong tone even as his cheeks grew pinker.

“But I am your prisoner. And not just a prisoner here, but yours personally. Not in a prison or under guard. In a guest room, as your guest.” Duncan started to piece it all together. “Why?”

“I… wanted to guarantee your safety. The sort of magic that-”

“I don’t know anything about this magic you’re talking about. I was-” Duncan cut himself off before revealing too much. “I remember nothing.”

“No, and either way, if I let them, my uncle’s men would find a way to get the information out of you. Whilst you are under my protection they will do nothing to harm you. Uncle Edgar has promised.”

“And that leaves us with why?” Duncan asked again. He took a step towards Char but then stopped as the prince flushed a little more and he felt himself do the same. Duncan was good at predicting the behaviour of people. Of moving before they could and shooting first. But being socially adept was not something he would call himself. That would require practised socialisation around people, it would require a life that was normal. And that was something he was only now on the verge of in his retirement. And even then…

“Why?”

“It is magic. Somehow, because… I dreamt about you. Before I met you. And now you are here and it feels… like you’re meant to be here.”

Char’s cheeks were now bright red and Duncan was sure that the young man’s heart was beating as fast as his own.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Duncan reveals all to Char.

Duncan balled his fists and felt, not for the first time, his fingers flexing against the empty space his once familiar and favourite holster had occupied. It was a natural instinct to him after so many years, and whilst he knew he didn't need a weapon to best someone, he missed the comfort of it.

The thought of comfort had brought Char to mind. His Royal Highness.

A boy compared to Duncan, one on the verge of some great life. One that Duncan couldn't be part of, as much as he wished it.

And wish it, he did.

Over the weeks since he had been in this place, Char had waited on him like a servant not a prince. He had been selfless and kind to a stranger in need - a weakness that Duncan could have easily exploited if fate had made it that Char was his assignment.

The thought was jarring. That life seemed so far away now. Even his thoughts of Camille had lessened, becoming far and few between. He knew she was taken care of. He had made that his responsibility. It *was* his responsibility. Or she was at least. And once she knew everything he had transferred her enough money to ensure she would never want for anything for the rest of her life.

She had been kind to him. Kinder than he had deserved. And it had been kindness, not tolerance. But being away from her had changed his perspective. As Char had cared for him, helping to ease his aches and bind his wounds as he recovered from the car collision, Duncan had realised what it was to be selfless.

And the truth was, whilst Camille might take some strange comfort in him being around, he realised it must hurt her deeply to see his face. To be around him and remember the face of the killer on that fateful day that took her family from her.

He knew she would have never asked him to leave. And he had never volunteered to. But now he realised he should have. And perhaps ending up here, however that had happened, was for the best for both of them. Truth was, maybe he was better off staying here and not attempting to get home. With Camille settled and the total safety of being unknown in this strange place, maybe it really was meant to be.

But Char?

Duncan let out a rumbled noise from his chest, his anger directed at himself.

He wanted to tell Char the truth. He wanted to tell him he knew who he was and where he was from. What he had done and why he had lied. But it had become too deep and long a lie now. One that he couldn't expect to be forgiven for, nor for who he was and the things he'd done. He couldn't expect love from someone like Char, someone so good and pure. Even if he hadn't lied all this time. Char was a Prince and--

Duncan's jaw clenched at the thought - *love.*

He should tell him for that alone, for those feelings. And whilst he knew deep in his heart that it was because he wanted Char to know everything about him and still look at him with those soft eyes in that adoring way, there was another more pressing reason.

He needed Char to understand his background and training, his experience with these things. So that the young prince would believe him when he told him that he was sure Edgar was planning to kill him. He had been suspicious of the man from the first moment they met, he had become a good judge of character over the years, something hadn't felt right. There was a way that the man looked at Char as though he was already picturing himself in the Prince's place. His motive was simple and as old as time - usurp power.

But it had all been suspicion with no evidence, one that had grown when he had heard tell of how the King had died. So much of it, to his outside and wary perspective, did not add up.

Duncan had wondered whether he simply wanted Char to need him. Wanted a reason to stay, and so his mind was jumping to conclusions. But he had continued to be wary nonetheless.

Duncan quietly moved from where he had been standing, his ear practically to the door of Edgar's office as he spoke with that strange creature that reminded Duncan of fairytales of witches with familiars. Periodically he had done this, sneaking around as he was so talented in doing. But today this was the closest thing to confirmation, and so he moved quickly from the private rooms, past the library he had become so familiar with and down through the servants quarters and out towards the training yard.

In those early days, as soon as he was given leave to roam freely, Duncan had made a mental catalogue of every part of the building and grounds. He knew this was the quickest route to where he knew the prince would be.

Even so, he was relieved to find him unharmed. Looking the picture of wondrous beauty like Duncan had never really known. It took such effort to restrain himself from pulling Char into his arms, satisfying himself with leaning close and whispering, "I believe you are in danger."

As Char's eyes widened with concern, Duncan resolved that Char was his responsibility now. And he would not leave his side if it meant that he could keep him safe.

*

"What's this about?" Char asked, concerned. He had never seen Duncan look like this before, so determined and sort of scared. He had always been quite laid back and certainly less

troubled that Char might have been had he found himself in a similar situation.

Duncan pushed his door closed and then leaned against it for a moment, listening, Char realised. He only turned to Char when he seemed certain that there was no one else beyond the door.

“I’m sorry I interrupted your training,” Duncan started, not looking at him as he approached and mumbled under his breath, “if you call that training, that fool wasn’t nearly good enough to--”

“Duncan,” Char interrupted. He stepped forward, frowning, and on impulse took Duncan’s hands into his own. “What is it, what’s happened?”

He felt Duncan shudder, and wondered if he should pull back. He was constantly schooling himself to not be as familiar with the man as he wished to be. He had no memory, he was alone here, anything that happened between them could only be Char taking advantage.

Before he had even finished the thought, Duncan raised his eyes and they gazed at each other so tenderly it made Char’s heart ache. He couldn’t deny his attraction, and it was more than the physical. More even than being compelled by the intimacy of a man he had dreamt of. There was just something about the gentle way Duncan was, the way something darker and more violent lingered beneath the surface, that often made Char wake hard and leaking.

“Duncan, I--” before Char could finish, Duncan’s mouth was crushed against his and his arms came around him. Char had never before felt so small, but also never before so safe and treasured.

Duncan fell back, taking Char with him until he was seated on the bed with Char in his lap. It took few adjustments to continue their embrace. He was perfectly straddled over the man’s thick thighs, feeling the heavy cock hardened beneath him.

They were pressed impossibly close, bodies practically entwined as their arms tightened around the other and the kiss deepened.

Without thought or reservation, Char started to rock. His own cock now painfully hard and trapped in his britches. He shifted forward to press it to Duncan’s soft belly as he writhed and enjoyed the friction of his cock caught between them.

“Duncan, Duncan…” Char babbled, wishing there were no clothes between them, but wishing even less to stop and achieve that. “I want--”

Duncan stopped suddenly, shaking and looking somewhat distraught. He had a tight grip on Char’s hips, holding him in place.

“We can’t… I can’t…” Duncan mumbled, looking away.

Char felt sick, he was sure that Duncan had wanted this. But now…

“It’s not right,” Duncan continued.

“I… Why?” Char asked gently, the pain of what he was saying was written all over Duncan’s face. “Don’t you want-”

“I want,” Duncan growled, digging his fingers into Char’s hips for just a moment before loosening again. “I want you, I want this, but it’s not right. I’ve lied to you.”

Char felt his skin prickle with unease. He was sure he should remove himself from Duncan’s lap, but he still couldn’t find it in him to do so, not yet.

“What have you lied about?” Char asked, swallowing his nerves.

Duncan squeezed his eye shut.

“I don’t have amnesia,” the words came out as a quick grumble.

At that Char did try to move, if he had lied about not knowing who he was it was in order to hide his identity. And Char couldn’t think of a reason why anyone would do that for a reason based in goodness.

Even so, he wasn’t afraid when Duncan felt him shift and then tightened his grip again to hold Char in place. He didn’t fight it and Duncan didn’t open his eye.

“I didn’t know who I could trust. The truth is stranger than I can account for. Perhaps it is magic, like your dreams.”

Char felt a shiver over his skin at the words and held himself back from wrapping himself around Duncan again. Such was the connection he felt to this man.

“I’m not from here,” Duncan continued. “I am from… Somewhere else. I’m not even sure where here is. I was in an accident, and I woke up here in that snow. And then I had to decide what I should do to get home, who I could trust.” He opened his eye then. “I trust you. I hate myself for lying to you, but I need you to know who I am before… if we’re to…”

“Tell me,” Char whispered, leaning in close. “I want to know you Duncan. I want to know everything about you.”

With a great heave of his chest, Duncan let out a sigh.

“It’s not an easy tale to hear. I was… I worked in the funeral business.”

Char tilted his head in question, not understanding.

Duncan swallowed audibly. “Creating funerals. I was an assassin, hired to kill people. Usually bad people for even worse people. And I don’t… I don’t regret it. It was my job. I’m retired now but… it was the only thing in life I was good at.”

“Murder?”

Duncan’s eyes were filled with tears.

“I regret it now, not… Not because of those people. There are very few of those I regret and I’ve made amends where I could. But because of the way you’re looking at me right now. How I have changed in your opinion.”

That brought Char back to himself and he shook his head.

“You aren’t that person. You aren’t that person here. That’s not the Duncan I’ve come to know. And maybe I’m being a fool? It was a different place, you say? You were a different person.”

Duncan shook his head. “I’m still the same person. I still did things that I cannot expect you to accept or forgive.”

Char shook his head, latching onto the words Duncan was saying. “Is it my place? Do I have a right to have an opinion?”

“Of course you do,” Duncan growled, his hands moving up to Char’s arms and gripping him tight. “I find that yours is now the only opinion that matters to me, and if you ask me to leave, I will do so with no question.”

Char shook his head without even thinking, the words bubbling up without choice, “don’t go… They were bad people?”

Duncan frowned. “Does it matter?” When Char couldn’t respond to that, Duncan continued. “Yes. All but one, a mistake that I have rectified as best as I could. The rest were criminals, usually they owed another criminal and their time was up.”

Char shuddered and Duncan ran his hands soothingly up and down his arms.

“I needed you to know. I don’t know how I am here. I don’t know how to get home. But I know who I am, and I know that you--”

“You don’t know anything,” Char replied firmly. “Do you think that kings keep kingdoms without fighting wars. I’m royalty, I was born with blood on my hands, all I can do is seek to make life as good as I can for my subjects.”

Duncan blinked, a smile trying to tug at his lips.

“I want to kiss you again,” Char all but whispered. “I want much more than a kiss.”

*

In the end, ‘much more’ resulted in them grinding together until both of them came undone in their britches. Duncan wanted it to be more, wanted more, but now was not the time for that. He wanted to take his time when he finally had that moment with Char, to worship him and love him absolutely.

After lazing together for a short while after, Duncan had run his hands over Char’s clothed form, feeling the heat of his flesh beneath them. But the important thing now was to make sure Char was protected.

He had told him everything he had overheard from Edgar and Heston's conversation. Plotting.

They planned to stir up more strife with the ogres and lead Char into peace talks from which he wouldn't return. Edgar would see to that, and then descend as the hero of the people to protect them from the ogres.

Char had listened intently and Duncan wasn't sure if the prince believed him. They had known each other such a short amount of time, and he had lied already. He had given Char a reason not to believe him.

And that was why he had said, "this was the other reason I needed to tell you who I am. So you will understand that this is a business I know about, Edgar is the sort I have dealt with before. I need you to know that I can protect you."

Char had blushed at that, and had said he needed time to think everything over, before finally kissing Duncan's cheek and leaving.

Duncan had been unsure whether Char would return, whether the guards might come for him instead, if he had seriously misjudged the situation.

But instead, a few hours later, Char returned.

"I believe you," he told Duncan as he came in and closed the door soundly.

They fell into each other's arms again, no kissing this time. Simply holding each other as though a pact had been formed between them.

"I need to gather evidence against Edgar, he is a powerful man. He has made himself powerful. It simply won't be as easy as denouncing him. And if you do, I fear the retaliation, he must have many people at his bidding to have ensured your father's death."

Duncan felt Char tense then shudder in his arms and so held him all the tighter, kissing his soft curls.

"We don't know who to trust, so I need you to protect yourself when I'm not around."

Char huffed good naturedly then and pulled back to look up at Duncan.

"You saw me yourself, training with my sword."

Duncan let out a low chuckle, "I did. It was terrible. The technique was very pretty, but not something suitable for a real fight."

*

Char had believed Duncan the moment he had raised his suspicions about Edgar. They weren't suspicions he had previously had himself, but as soon as Duncan said it, he knew it to be true.

Even if it hadn't slotted perfectly into his mind, causing such rage over his father's death once more, that Char had to walk away for a while, he would have still trusted Duncan enough to believe him.

Maybe he shouldn't after the truth Duncan had kept from him, but their connection transcended that.

So now in the late afternoon sun, Duncan taught him how to throw knives.

They stood pressed together as Duncan helped hold his arm at the correct position and helped him aim and release at each of the targets Duncan had set up.

"Close your mind and pull the trigger," Duncan muttered into his ear, making his knees go slightly weak. There was something so reassuring about the firm, large frame against his own. He just hoped he could draw on that feeling when he was alone with his knives to protect him.

"What?" Char muttered, Duncan's words finally hitting him. "Trigger?"

Duncan paused and stiffened, before relaxing again a moment later, as though a memory or a feeling just stabbed through his mind.

"Just close your eyes and release the knife, your eyes know where the target is. Trust yourself."

Char took a breath and did as asked, closing his eyes tight before throwing his final dagger.

It hit the target perfectly.

*

That night Duncan left Char with a set of throwing knives under his pillow before going back to his own room. He hated to do so and leave Char potentially unprotected. If Edgar realised that they were onto him, he might change his plans. Surely he could simply arrange for Char to be murdered in his bed and a story of ogres and assassins created to explain it.

Duncan knew there was every chance that it would be himself framed for Char's murder. What a perfect scapegoat he would be. A mysterious stranger who had ingratiated himself with the young prince.

That was why he could not rest. He went back to his room and opened the door, planning to lay low there whilst the castle slumbered and then break into Edgar's office and find the evidence they would need.

He only hoped it would be that simple.

Duncan stepped into his room and didn't have chance to close the door before realising that there was someone there with him. In the dim light coming through the window, there stood a man with his sword drawn and ready.

He was sure that he could handle the man easily, and would have done so, if someone had then not come at him from his blind side.

Duncan once more found himself bludgeoned over the head and quickly losing consciousness.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Edgar's plan is revealed.

Duncan opened his eyes and immediately felt a splitting pain through his skull that continued long after he shut them.

He moved a hand up to feel where he had been hit, but there was nothing wet there, no broken skin. That was something at least.

Duncan felt the softness of the bed beneath him and realised someone must have found him out there in the snow. The car had hit him hard, he could barely remember anything of the event itself. He remembered practically flying through the air and then feeling like he broke everything as he landed, cracking his head on something hard.

Duncan tried to open his eyes again and realised the room wasn't even that bright. There was a soft cosiness to it that reminded him of Camille's house. Perhaps she had found him and brought him to her own house to care for him? The thought made his chest tightened. There was a peace between them now but he'd never expect such a thing from her.

"Camille?" His voice broke thanks to his dry throat, and his head thumped as he tried to sit. He would find her and apologise for the inconvenience. Though he might have to get her to drive him back over to his own cabin as he wasn't sure he'd make the walk. His legs were weak as he tried to stand and he suddenly felt all of his age and all of the injuries he had ever sustained.

That was when he realised he'd been drugged.

Painkillers?

"Camille?"

There was no answer and he realised that his voice echoed strangely around the room, as though the walls were stone rather than the wood of her cabin.

Not Camille's then?

Duncan tried to move off the bed but immediately collapsed back down, his legs unable to support him.

The most dangerous time for men is the year they retire. He had always thought that saying referred to boredom setting in, to being unable to live a life beyond that he had known for

decades. To leave it all behind and just be some normal, well-adjusted person.

But then Damocles had come for him and he realised that it meant you let your guard down when you retired.

Maybe that car had been someone trying to kill him? Not a good hitman for sure, but it should have done the job. Had they now kidnapped him? Hoped to keep him drugged and then…

Then what? There was no one to extort, there was nothing to be gained. The only reason now for anyone to want to kill him would be revenge, and Camille was the only one he really considered entitled to that.

Duncan huffed as he felt woozy, falling completely back onto the bed, his muscles so heavy that he wondered if his heart and lungs would give out, relax to the point of not working.

He closed his eyes.

*

Char had spent days concerned about Duncan, but after what the man had said, he didn't want to draw too much attention to it.

Either Char had been lied to and made a fool of before Duncan ran off and left, or Duncan was right about his uncle and something terrible had befallen him.

And the truth was, he knew deep in his heart that it was the latter. And that Duncan had only spoken the truth about his uncle.

That was why, at breakfast that morning, when Edgar had pleasantly asked "how is your new friend fairing?"

Char had replied, "he was very well healed and I haven't seen him so I think he now must have left as he had planned to."

"With no thanks, how rude. Well, at least it's nothing for you to worry about now. Especially with the coronation tomorrow."

Char had smiled and nodded whilst inside his guts roiled. How had he never seen beyond his uncle's facade before? It seemed so obvious now. Every expression, every tone and every word was villainous and somehow Char had never seen it before.

Being so convinced of his uncle's hand in Duncan's disappearance was the reason that Char now found himself in Edgar's private office looking for clues. The office had of course been locked, however it had once been his father's office and Char knew the secret ways in and out of all the places in the castle, including this one.

He was just grateful that his uncle was not within when he made his way into the office through the small sliding panel next to the fireplace.

The office was neat, coldly so. When his father had used this office there had been a comfort in the way he had piles of papers haphazard on his desk. Various correspondences with friends in other kingdoms, a testament to the king's diplomacy and warmth. Char was struck by how much he missed him, and how different Edgar was. He could only resolve to be more like his father than Edgar when it came his time to rule.

"Hello Prinssssss," Char startled and turned to see the snake, Heston, curled within the bookshelf.

There was no chance of pretense now, and soon he would be king, so Char demanded "where is Duncan? I know Edgar has something to do with his disappearance."

The snake hissed its strange laugh.

"Did you learn nothing from your father? It doesn't do to emotionally invest, it leaves you vulnerable from attack by those you least expect."

Char let out a cry at those words and leapt forward, intent on throttling the horrid creature.

Before he could reach the bookcase, the door swung open and Char found himself knocked to the ground by two of his uncle's guards as Edgar walked in behind them.

"Oh Char, how I'd wished to avoid such unpleasantness." Edgar's tone was an amused growl. "Bring him," he ordered the guard before turning on his heel and leaving the office.

Char was hoisted up, each guard taking an arm and dragging him as they went through the castle and out, around the side of a great wall and then down into an entrance to the dungeons that Char was sure hadn't been used in centuries.

Once inside, it was clear his uncle had changed that. The dungeon had been completely refitted and was clearly walled off from the main dungeons which were now only used for storage.

Within, there were cells, one of which had been knocked through to create one long living space - a bed, a desk, a few other amenities but nothing you could call a luxury.

"What is this?" Char demanded.

"It's my plan, Char. You see I had intended to kill you and take the throne, but then I came across these young ladies and a new idea was born."

Edgar signalled and from one of the small cells, two young women were dragged.

"Unhand me," the dark haired one cried out, looking like she might rip one of the guard's throats out if she was given a chance.

"This lovely young lady is Ella of Frell, and this talented fairy is Lucinda Perryweather. When Ella was born Lucinda gave her the gift of obedience. Once her step mother realised, she of course turned her over to me to show her loyalty. But it isn't the girl that interests me, only the gift given by Lucinda. And she is going to give you this gift now too. For, should

you die, there will always be those loyal to you and your father, but if you freely abdicate, turning out for special occasions to show that I have your full support, then who can possibly argue with that?"

"Why?" Char cried out.

Edgar cocked his head, bemused.

"For the power of course. I will be king and I will make this kingdom great in a way your father never could. So set on diplomacy and peace, when he could have been ruling the ogres and elves and giants. Imagine, if they were subjugated fully, an enslaved army of ogres at my command to help conquer the next kingdom and then the next."

"You're mad!" Char growled, pulling against the guards that held him.

"Your opinion counts for little." Edgar laughed. "Do it Lucinda, I want Prince Charmont's obedience."

Edgar turned a harsh glare on the fairy who, obviously fearful, nodded and began. With tears streaming down her face and a guard holding her tight, she muttered the incantation and Char immediately felt something pulled taut within him.

"Excellent." Edgar clasped his hands together, grinning like a cat. "The guards are going to release you now Char, but *do not move*."

Char felt the pull within his body, a strain that was almost painful that he couldn't fight against as his body obediently behaved and he stayed stock still whilst the guards released him.

"Ha!" Edgar cheered. "*Stand on one leg*."

The same pull and strain had Char obeying regardless of how he fought it.

"Of course, you are a smart fellow and could be playing along. So one final test. *Follow me*."

Edgar turned and walked through the dungeon, out into a hidden courtyard. The dirty glass roof above it would have obscured its previous detection, and it let in just enough light to feel as though they were almost outside.

Char followed closely behind, the guards holding him once more so that he could make no move to harm Edgar even as he obeyed him.

"Here, a true test."

Edgar stopped and stepped to one side, indicating the centre of the courtyard with a sweep of his hand.

Char let out a cry as he saw Duncan, beaten and bruised, chained in the centre of the courtyard. His mind barely even acknowledging the fact that, in a cruel twist, his uncle had

turned the courtyard into a grotesque replica of the Hall of Mirrors above them in the castle, where his father had proposed to his mother long ago.

Edgar took Char's hand and placed a dagger in it, folding his fingers around it until it was in Char's grip.

"You will take this dagger and plunge it in his heart. *Kill him*," Edgar's words dripped with menace. "Then I will know the spell has worked."

With the dagger in his hand and tears streaming from his eyes, Char advanced on Duncan.

"Please, no." He begged, unable to stop himself as he fought every step forward. "I'll do anything uncle. You don't need a spell."

"Oh Char, I know you are much too principled for that to be the truth. You could never choose the life of one person over abdicating. Not when you know that whichever of us rules will impact the fate of all subjects and not just this one before you."

More tears flowed as Char knew that Edgar was right.

He didn't want to kill Duncan, his heart was breaking at the thought as it had been at his loss over the last few days. He loved him, there was no denying it. He was sure he had loved him before he even knew him outside of his dreams. But even so, how could he put one person before a kingdom and still be a king?

He looked in the mirrors and remembered being a child, his father taking him to the hall of mirrors and telling him to look in the mirror and see himself as a great leader. He never could before, not until Duncan came along and now he understood all too well what it meant to be a great leader and the sacrifices he might have to make.

"Duncan," Char said his name almost as a plea.

At that Duncan looked up from where he lay, his eye patch gone and the side of his face a mass of bruises. So much so that even trying to open his good eye was a clear effort.

"Where am I?" He asked, "Are you from Damocles?"

"Duncan, it's me." Char pleaded. Was this another act?

Char felt pain through every part of his body as he tried to fight his uncle's command. Straining against it until he felt like his skin would tear.

Duncan shook his head, as though trying to clear it, blinking as he looked up and around him.

"Duncan please, stop me." Char begged, his last option as he loomed over the man he loved. The man who above all, he knew, could stop him with little effort.

"Char?" Duncan blinked again, swiftly getting to his feet, "what's happening?"

Duncan looked bewildered, and Char wasn't sure how much he remembered of the last weeks. He just hoped Duncan knew how much he cared for him.

"He has ordered me to kill you, a spell. I don't want to, please…" Char was unable to hold back any longer, lunging forward. Duncan moved quickly away from the attack, stopped only by the manacles around his hands and feet.

When Char turned to lunge again, Duncan caught him, more of an embrace than a restrictive hold. Char could feel the tears burning his cheeks as he struggled to fight the compulsion to do as he had been ordered.

And then Duncan held him close, his lips pressed to Char's ear.

"Try not to be scared. You make mistakes when you're afraid." Duncan told him softly. "Be the king you must be."

Char let out a shuddering breath, meeting his own eyes in the mirror across from them. He was scared, he was terrified that there was no way out of this without Duncan dying, and with him part of Char's soul too.

But the words, the calming tone and strong presence of the man he loved helped clear Char's mind, helped him think of other options.

"*Get on with it*," Heston hissed, laughing.

With that Char's body strained again and he realised something he had missed before. That it wasn't just Edgar's order he would obey, but those from anyone. If he could just get someone to order him to stop.

Char met his own eyes and swallowed. Could it be so simple?

"You will no longer be obedient," he ordered his reflection. "You will no longer be obedient!"

Char felt his body go pliant, and then he fell and the world went blank.

In the darkness there was a light, growing until it became blinding. And then he was in one of his dreams, but it wasn't just Duncan there now. There were others that looked like Duncan, and just as many that looked like himself, but all somehow different. Different clothes, different hair, different stories etched in the lines of their faces. At the centre of them all was a shattered teacup, Char watched as it came back together.

One Month after the Coronation

Duncan stood in front of the mirror adjusting his collar and taking one last look before unlacing his shirt. He looked like something from a renaissance fayre, but it didn't look as silly as it might. Perhaps because everyone had been dressed this way, at his wedding.

Duncan swallowed, a shiver going down his spine at the thought. At the memory of it.

Once Edgar had been imprisoned for treason - Duncan was unable to talk Char out of repealing beheading in the kingdom - he had assumed it was his time to go. He might have no interest in returning to his own home, wherever that was, but he found he couldn't leave.

And Char didn't want him to go.

They had spent that night in each other's arms and in the morning Char declared, as the king, that Duncan mustn't leave. Instead they created a story for him. His amnesia had been known throughout the castle, and it was a simple story to say his memory had been recovered and that Duncan was in fact a prince from a far off kingdom.

Owing such a debt to them both, Lucinda had taken their plight to the fairies and ensured that the story became part of history in a way no one could discover it to be anything other than the truth. So indebted was Ella for her rescue that she offered, when the time came, to be their surrogate as was required if two princes intended to marry.

In his greedy clamour for power, it turned out that Edgar had given them a neat solution to everything and their engagement was announced immediately after Char's coronation.

It had been a whirlwind, and so had this day been. One of happiness and vows, laughter and dancing. And now with all the guests gone and midnight struck, Duncan waited in Char's room - their room now - for his king and husband.

The door to the attached bathing room opened and Char emerged, his cheeks pink. He looked disheveled, his own shirt untucked and billowing over his loosely laced britches, neither doing much to hide the king's ample erection.

"Char," Duncan smiled at the sight of him and held out his hand. He had missed him for the short time they had been separated. Char had not been in the bathroom long, but it had seemed an age to Duncan, not least as his own cock ached in anticipation.

Many nights since the first that they had been intimate, they had experienced that intimacy again, and sometimes more. Duncan had prepared himself one evening and rode the king until they were both sated. But he had never expected or requested the same of Char. Char didn't have the same experience and was a virgin in that consideration.

But recently Char had wished for more, encouraging Duncan's mouth and fingers. In the end he had breathlessly declared that he wished for Duncan to have him in that way on their wedding night. The only act of consummation that remained to them.

For weeks Duncan had this in mind, pumping his fingers into his king as he sucked his cock, or as Char stroked their hard lengths together. But tonight Char had wanted to prepare himself, teasing Duncan with sighs and soft moans from the bathroom as he worked an oiled wooden appendage in and out of himself so that he might take his husband with no fuss.

"Duncan," Char replied with a shy smile. Duncan loved to see Char - so confident and brave - reduced to such delicacy. He was sure Char wouldn't remain so shy for long, and Duncan's cock twitched at the thought of days and months and years to come when his husband would throw him to the bed and ride him with abandon.

But for now, Char moved shyly towards the bed, taking Duncan's outreached hand and leading him over.

Duncan wanted nothing more than to show his love and adoration by worshiping his king slowly and thoroughly. He trembled as Char stopped next to the bed and dropped his hand to start unlacing his shirt.

"Here," Duncan said, closing the space between them and taking the laces from Char's fingers. He slowly pulled at them until the top of Char's shirt began to reveal more and more of his beautiful flesh. He took the bottom of the shirt and slowly pulled it up and off, feeling Char shudder as he did.

Char was panting heavily, watching intently as Duncan pulled his own shirt off and then his britches and underclothes, until he stood naked. Duncan didn't miss the way Char's eyes roved over him, as always, taking in every scar, every imperfection and then his hard and leaking cock.

Duncan could feel Char shivering again as he then pulled open his already unlaced britches and slowly pushed them down as he sank to his knees. Duncan leaned in, a kitten lick at first, but then he took Char into his mouth and sucked softly until the king was moaning.

"Duncan…"

When Duncan pulled back, Char moved away, climbing onto the bed and lying back into the overstuffed pillows. He watched intently as Duncan rose to his feet and started forward, spreading his legs for Duncan as he did.

Duncan moved over Char like a predator stalking his prey, taking another kiss as he slid two fingers inside the king and felt how slick he was with the oil, how loose he was from the toy. So ready for him that it made Duncan groan into Char's mouth.

"I want it, pl--"

Before Char could even finish the words, Duncan removed his fingers and slid his cock into him. A slow but unceasing action until he was buried deep inside. Char let out a whimper and threw his arms and legs around Duncan in encouragement.

"I might be the king," Char gasped, "but you will always have such power over me. I am helpless when it comes to my need for you. Reality tore itself apart so we might find each other, and now we never need let go again."

Duncan shuddered at the words, at the love he felt. He continued to slowly move, deep and languid thrusts as their bodies rocked together.

He had never realised he could love someone like this before, he had been so detached for so many years. He had never desired someone to love him back like this until Char.

"You are my home," Duncan grunted the words, lost in the way Char held him tight and whimpered beneath him. "I will never leave."

Char's fingers dug into his back and they rocked closer and faster together. Building a sensual movement until there was nothing but then and the pleasure coursing through them.

Duncan came harder than he ever had before, his vision blurring for a moment, the image of a teacup there as felt Char come between them and tighten around him.

He really was home.

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